

## Message Text

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73

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

SP-02 PRS-01 IO-03 SCCT-01 L-01 /040 W

----- 125045

R 211412Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3520

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 18870

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PLS PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US, EG

SUBJ: SYRIAN MOOD, POST SADAT AND PRE SALZBURG

REF: DAMASCUS 1833

1. IN COURSE OF PAST 10 DAYS I HAVE HAD SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH ASAD, KHADDAM, PRESIDENTIAL POLITICAL ADVISOR DAOUDI AND COS SHIHABI. SAW ASAD AND DAOUDI BEFORE SADAT'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS AND KHADDAM AND SHIHABI FOLLOWING THAT VISIT. I FOUND ALL FOUR INTERESTED IN MY COMMENTS ABOUT THE US POLICY REASSESSMENT BUT UNIFORMLY RESERVED ABOUT SYRIA'S POSITION TOWARDS FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. THIS RESERVE WAS REFLECTED IN THE RECEPTION SADAT RECEIVED HERE ON MAY 17-18. WHILE OFFICIALLY THE PROPRIETIES WERE OBSERVED, THE GREETING GIVEN SADAT COULD ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS MINIMAL. EGYPTIAN EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE EXPRESSED SURPRISE TO US THAT THE SARG MADE NO EFFORT  
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TO LAY ON A POPULAR RECEPTION FOR SADAT EITHER AT THE

AIRPORT OR IN DOWNTOWN DAMASCUS AND HAVE SCOFFED AT REPORTED SYRIAN EXPLANATION THAT SADAT WAS SIMPLY VISITING "ANOTHER TOWN IN HIS OWN COUNTRY" (AS HEAD OF THE FEDERATION OF ARAB REPUBLICS). ASAD'S PERSONAL GREETING AND LEAVE TAKING OF SADAT WERE WARM IN KEEPING WITH ASAD'S NORMAL COURTESY. BUT THE POINT WAS NONETHELESS REGISTERED; SYRIA WAS UNDERSCORING THE DISTANCE SEPARATING ITSELF FROM THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT WHO HAD COME HERE CIRCUIT RIDING IN AN EFFORT TO SPEAK LATER, AS HE HIMSELF DESCRIBED IT AT HIS MAY 18 PRESS CONFERENCE, FOR THE "MAJORITY OF MY COLLEAGUES" AT SALZBURG.

3. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE FALLOUT LOCALLY ABOUT THE SADAT/ASAD CONVERSATIONS. WHAT LITTLE WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER IS THAT ASAD WAS PESSIMISTIC THAT ANYTHING POSITIVE FROM THE ARAB POINT OF VIEW WOULD COME OUT OF SALZBURG. HE REPORTEDLY AGREED NOT TO OBSTRUCT SADAT'S EFFORTS BUT RESERVED HIS OPTION TO CRITICIZE THE WHOLE APPROACH IN THE EVENT SALZBURG FAILED TO ACHIEVE ANY FORWARD MOTION.

4. THE CURRENT SYRIAN MOOD IS HIGHLY CAUTIOUS; THEIR INSTINCT TO AWAIT DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES OF OTHERS HAS NEVER BEEN MORE PRONOUNCED. THIS WAS EXEMPLIFIED IN KHADDAM'S ANSWER TO MY QUESTION MAY 20 ABOUT HOW HE VIEWED SADAT'S MISSION AND SALZBURG. KHADDAM REPLIED SIMPLY THAT SYRIA HOPED THAT THE SADAT/FORD MEETING WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL AND "WOULD REALIZE PROGRESS WITHIN THE FRAME-WORK OF OUR DISCUSSION WITH SADAT." HE WOULD ELABORATE ONLY THAT THIS MEANT AGREEMENT ON WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF UN RESOLUTIONS PROVIDING FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS.

5. I SUSPECT, BUT CANNOT PROVE, THAT SYRIAN PREOCCUPATION OVER ITS CONFRONTATION WITH IRAQ MAY BE AT WORK HERE. WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE SYRIAN POSTURE OF STAYING ONE STEP BEHIND EGYPT IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. BY DROPPING EVEN FURTHER BEHIND THEY MAY BE HOPING TO AVOID SETTING THEMSELVES UP AS A TARGET, IF SALZBURG DOES "FAIL". THIS ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE SYRIAN POSTURE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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PROBABLY THE BEST WE SHOULD EXPECT FROM DAMASCUS OVER THE COMING WEEKS.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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